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New York

President:	Ms. Kaag	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kononuchenko
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley are joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Dublin and Biel, Switzerland, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Recalling the Security Council's latest note 507 on its working methods (S/2017/507), I wish to encourage all participants, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and to focus on key issues. Briefers are further encouraged to limit initial remarks to 15 minutes or less.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: Famines and extreme hunger have been a part of the human experience since the first person walked the Earth. Yet it is possible to eradicate famine from the human experience within our lifetime. I would like to take a few moments to explain to the Security Council why I think that is the case and how it can help achieve that goal.

Despite the wildest predictions, famines have become less frequent and less lethal over the past few decades. That is an big achievement. What happened?

First, we have seen a dramatic expansion in agricultural output and productivity, making more food available and making it cheaper. In the past 50 years, dramatic improvements in agriculture, from plant breeding to pest prevention to storage to irrigation to transportation, produced a fourfold increase in food grain production using only 12 per cent more agricultural land. Transportation networks, improvements in cold-chain technology, science and trade allow food to be available more consistently and more predictably. That trend is likely to continue. Science and human ingenuity are likely to continue to increase productivity, and we will seize the enormous potential to develop agricultural land in less productive areas of the world with today's technology and rising demand.

Secondly, we have witnessed a global reduction in poverty. Large numbers of previously poor people have gained purchasing power over larger volumes of food now being produced. That would not have happened without international action and support, including help with safety net schemes in some of the poorest countries over the past 20 years, which have been able to scale up and down as harvests fail or succeed and which have been adopted into national policy frameworks. That means that we do not have to face situations in which drought automatically turns into famine.

While most of the world is better off and faces fewer risks of famine and hunger, some people still experience the opposite. The remaining risk of famine and hunger is now concentrated in a relatively small number of countries affected by large-scale, severe and protracted conflict. Nearly two thirds of the world's hungry live in countries in conflict. Nearly 500 million undernourished people — and almost 80 per cent of the world's 155 million stunted children — live in countries affected by conflict.

My colleagues at the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme, together with the European Union, released a new study yesterday confirming that conflict — often conflated with extreme climatic shock and high prices of staple foods — is now the main driver of global food insecurity. That includes the four countries where there was a famine risk last year. Famine was prevented in those countries only through concerted international efforts.

We therefore have to build on the experience of last year and sustain and expand our efforts in those countries, with more funding and better access, while we continue to join up humanitarian life-saving with longer-term development efforts. We also need to build upon the vast experience in the humanitarian system, which, over the past decades, has become more effective, efficient and better funded. We have learned a difficult lesson: between hunger and death there lies disease. Our response has become more professional and more integrated. We cover health, nutrition and

education, in addition to food, water and shelter, which used to be our focus.

Most people affected by conflict live in rural areas, but South Sudan's former breadbasket, the Equatorias, has nearly emptied as farmers have fled to Uganda. In cities, fighting hinders other food production, transportation and distribution to larger parts of the population, reducing access to food and causing prices to increase. When civilians exhaust their resilience, they are often forced to flee. Once people are displaced, food insecurity increases for both displaced people and their hosts — communities of people who themselves are often living on the cusp of survival. Hunger is the clear corollary of the vicious cycle of displacement and conflict.

The behaviour of combatants in these contexts is often atrocious. Humanitarian access — both by agencies to reach people and for people to reach aid — is too often difficult or denied. In some cases, starvation is being used as a method of warfare. Warring parties damage or destroy water systems, farms, livestock and markets. Food-sellers and traders face looting and exorbitant costs to get food to their clients.

International humanitarian law is designed to protect against hunger in armed conflict. The fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution serve to safeguard civilian objects necessary for food production and distribution. International humanitarian law is very clear: it prohibits starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare; it prohibits attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population; it requires that humanitarian personnel and assets be respected and protected; and it requires that all parties to conflict allow and facilitate impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need and that they ensure that humanitarian personnel have the freedom of movement to carry out life-saving work.

While parties to conflict bear the primary responsibility for respecting international humanitarian law, all States carry the duty to ensure that that law is respected. Members of the Security Council have influence over parties to conflicts. The Council has the means to investigate violations of the law. The Council also has the means to enhance accountability when that law is violated.

There are no humanitarian solutions to conflict. We all know that peace and political solutions are what will disrupt the vicious cycle of conflict and hunger. The Security Council's main responsibility is peace and international security. In other words, the Council can help prevent famine from ever occurring again.

The President: I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beasley.

Mr. Beasley: It is great, Madam President, to be with you in the digital world. It is always good to see you, Madam, and it is great to be speaking before the Security Council. It is good to hear from my friend Mark Lowcock, who is doing a great job. I have really come to respect him and the spirit he has in building the teams and coalitions that are necessary to confront the conflicts, the wars, the hunger and the other problems that we are facing on a day-to-day basis.

When I took this role about a year ago, I visited over 36 countries, some of them multiple times, and what I have seen is good news and bad news. What we are reporting as of yesterday is extremely bad news, and as Mark was saying, there is no reason that there should ever be famine in the world today. There is actually no reason there should be hunger in the world today, when we have $300 trillion of available wealth. But wars and conflicts are driving hunger in a way we have never seen before. In fact, the hunger rate went up from 777 million people to 815 million people, as Council members are well aware. But what is very disturbing is that, even though we have been able to avert famine in countries like South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria, particularly its north-east, we now have three countries that are again on the brink of famine, and it is absolutely horrific that we were in this place.

But what we have seen for the past three years is that the number of those who are severely hungry — those who are literally marching to the brink of starvation — has gone from 80 million people to 108 million people, 108 million people to 124 million people. We do not have enough money to feed full rations to 80 million people. The moneys of the World Food Programme are about $6 billion; we need $9 to $10 billion just to reach the 108 million people, much less the 124 million people. The question we have to ask ourselves today is, what is driving this extreme hunger rate? The answer is, as Mark clearly stipulated, human-made conflict. I speak here on behalf of the Rome-based agencies, understanding that we can in fact end world hunger by 2030, but we cannot do it as long as there is conflict.

Let me paint a couple pictures of what I see as a worst-case scenario if we do not get ahead of the curve. This is what I said to the security conference in Munich just a few weeks ago, where I saw many members of the Council in the Chamber today. When we take a country the size of Syria, for example, with approximately 20 million people, with destabilization and conflict, we know from our studies and surveys that for every 1 per cent increase in hunger there is a 2 per cent increase in migration. What is also very clear is that a Syrian, like any other internally displaced person, will move two, three or four times inside his or her country before he or she will leave the country. The cost of feeding a Syrian inside Syria, for example, is about 50 cents per day, which is almost double the normal cost, because the cost of war creates additional transportation and logistics costs. By the way, because of conflict, we incur an additional $1 billion in extra costs in terms of just delivering food. But back to the point: 50 cents per day for feeding a Syrian in Syria, €50 per day for the total humanitarian support and costs, whether it is in Switzerland or Germany or anywhere else in Europe.

As I tell my friends, if leaders today — wherever it is in the world, but particularly in Europe — think they had a problem with the migration issue, having been infiltrated by a few elements from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), from a nation of 20 million people, with ISIS moving down into the greater Sahel region — an area of 500 million people — and partnering with Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaida, then they should consider that we cannot stand and continue to take the old approach to address the issues in this arena. We have got to rethink how to use humanitarian dollars more effectively, how to use development dollars more effectively to address hunger in conflict, because humanitarian aid and development are clearly related to one another. What we are seeing, therefore, is that we have to get ahead of the curve and work together as a team with better collaboration and coordination.

For example, we feed almost 80 million people on any given day, and we are feeding millions of people on any given day in the greater Sahel region. We know that last year alone, out of our 80 some odd million, more than 10 million were involved with the food-for-asset programme. What does that mean? When you feed 80-something million people a day, as Mark can tell you, you learn a lot. You listen to people; they hear things, they tell you things. They know what is going on.

ISIS and terrorist groups want to use food as a weapon of recruitment, a weapon of war — as Mark was saying, a weapon of destruction. We think that the Security Council, the United Nations in general and our donors around the world, our Member States, should use food as a weapon of reconstruction, a weapon of peace, a weapon for bringing people together.

Let me just give some results in connection with the 10 million people that we had engaged in a food-for-asset programme. This shows what happens when sustainability and resilience are created in areas that are dramatically impacted for a variety of reasons — yes, terrorism, but also climate impact. We see drought-stricken areas in the greater Sahel region and what happens there; not just in the greater Sahel, but in Ethiopia, in Kenya, in Somalia and other places.

I have yet to meet a single beneficiary who did not want to improve his or her community and life position. They do not want support only in terms of saving lives but also in terms of changing lives. We reforested more than 8,000 hectares of land just last year. More than 137,000 hectares of land were rehabilitated, as well as more than 5,000 water ponds and shallow wells. More than 11,000 kilometres of roads were rebuilt and repaired, as well as feeder roads for markets and access.

The point is, it is not just about feeding people, it is giving them resilience. The mothers will explain that they did not want to see their husbands join ISIS, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab. But they will tell you also that after their little girl or their little boy had not eaten in two weeks, the husband had no choice but to join. So they yield because of conditions of vulnerability, where they do not have resilience or sustainable development. But when we carry out the programmes effectively, sustainable development and resilience are created, giving families opportunities — not just saving lives but changing livelihoods and giving opportunities. Great things happen, and this minimizes the impact of extremist groups in these very fragile areas.

Let me just give an example. When I was speaking just two weeks with the Minister of Agriculture — we all understand that there is a climate impact with regard to the greater Sahel region — I was told that the Sahara is moving down at the rate of 1.5 kilometres per year into the pasturelands, the greenlands, the croplands. What does that mean? On the surface, it may not seem

that big of a deal. But the herders and the pastoralists are having to move down 1.5 kilometres with it to have vegetation for their cattle, their goats, their sheep, and that means more conflict with farmers. We are seeing that conflict continuing to destabilize the situation, and the extremist groups are trying to take advantage of it.

I therefore plead with the Security Council to help us first and foremost in the wars. The Council, I believe, has a chance to do more to impact the world than in any time period in our history, because we are facing the worst humanitarian crisis in the history of the United Nations. I believe that the men and women in this Chamber, who are from various nations, may have differences on some issues, but should not have difference on all issues. Let us work together to end conflict. Let us work together to make certain that we have the access we need to provide humanitarian and development support. Until we do so, we will never solve world hunger, because hunger is directly related to conflict, and conflict is directly related to hunger.

I think that Mark and I could probably answer questions for hours upon hours and speak to this issue from the heart all day long, but I wish to thank you, Madam President, for allowing us this opportunity to speak briefly and let the Council know what we are seeing out there on any given day. The Council's support is vital and critical to our continued success.

The President: I thank Mr. Beasley for his briefing, and, in my national capacity, both briefers for their very compelling story, narrative and clear call to action.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

I should like once again to reiterate our thanks to Mark Lowcock and David Beasley for their comprehensive and informative briefings.

It is very clear that one of the main causes of hunger is conflict: man-made conflict. After decades of a steady decline in the number of people suffering from malnutrition and famine, today we are faced with a dangerous setback, one that endangers Sustainable Development Goal 2, a world of zero hunger. The unthinkable is happening: hunger is again on the rise.

Last year, the Secretary-General called on the Council to take action in response to no fewer than four major new famines: in Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and Nigeria. These famines were directly threatening 20 million people: men, women and children. These and other examples of food insecurity have one important factor in common, and one alone: conflict.

In our world of abundance, technology and big data, famine is completely avoidable. Where it happens, it is man-made. It occurs where people harm other people. Regrettably, so-called man-made famine is almost becoming a tautology.

While all-out famine has been barely averted in the four countries I just mentioned, many people remain extremely food-insecure. This entails grave risks for regional stability, as conflict and hunger do not respect national borders or boundaries. Rising levels of hunger and conflict will lead to greater migration, force displacement and put severe pressure on host countries in the region and beyond. The fact that this is happening in the twenty-first century, in an age of unparalleled progress, technological possibilities and wealth, is shameful.

If people are the main cause of famine and food insecurity in conflict situations, then surely people are able to resolve this issue. This means that the end of famine depends on political will.

Armed conflict affects food security in many ways. In modern warfare we see fields of crops being destroyed, bakeries burned and markets hit. We see parties to a conflict deliberately denying access to food aid for civilians in need. We see indiscriminate bombing that damages food sources and prevents civilians from reaching them safely. We see this all too often, in too many places.

I recently visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the camp of Katanika, an older lady told me that all her family members had had to flee their villages, leaving everything behind. They do not have enough to eat and no longer have a way of producing their own food. Going back to their villages of origin is impossible: everything has been destroyed.

In South Sudan, army checkpoints prevent aid convoys from reaching their destination. The recent report by the Panel of Experts stated in no uncertain terms that starvation was being used there as a weapon of war.

Elsewhere, as in Syria, we witness situations that we would not have imagined possible in our era. Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock said in a briefing

to the Council on 28 February, so very recently, that without humanitarian access,

> "we will soon see even more people dying from starvation and disease than from the bombing and shelling". (*see S/PV.8195, p. 3*)

In Yemen as well, we see the denial of access having grave consequences for the number of people suffering from food insecurity.

Clearly, the problem is not a lack of rules. Rather, it is the persistent failure of warring parties to comply with those rules. That is what causes civilians in conflict to suffer even more.

Together, we, the international community, have agreed to regulate the conduct of warfare: to spare civilians in conflict to the greatest extent possible and to respect, above all, their human dignity. Flouting the law of war not only turns these norms into hollow phrases; it erodes the rules-based international order itself. We cannot allow that to happen.

Hunger caused by conflict as well as starvation reflect our collective failure, and the Council has a collective responsibility to address it and to prevent it from happening in future. For this we need a detailed framework for action.

First, we should reaffirm the norms established over the past 70 years: the prohibition of starvation as a method of warfare, the protection of civilian objects necessary for food production, and, above all, guarantees for humanitarian access. International humanitarian law, which all warring parties are obliged to respect and comply with, defines our humanity. We must not allow those rules to unravel.

Secondly, we should take a firm stance against violations of international law by holding to account those responsible for such violations. That can be done within national jurisdictions; but where those jurisdictions fail, international mechanisms come into play. In such situations, the most serious cases should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, we should step up our efforts to prevent food insecurity in conflict. The Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme and their partners have the means and technology to issue early warnings, which they regularly report on. In conflict situations, it is up to the Council to follow up with early action, not only to prevent conflicts from exacerbating food insecurity in the short-term by ensuring humanitarian access, but also to save societies from the perils of a generation raised in hunger. We therefore need continuous engagement by the Council.

Finally, humanitarian aid in itself is not a sustainable answer. It never has been. Only political solutions can truly end suffering. Therein lies the most important task for the Council.

Hunger is the most avoidable of disasters. Starvation is the most heinous method of warfare. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that the starvation of civilians becomes a crime of the past — a practice both forbidden and punishable. I am counting on the support of those present and look forward to working together to achieve that important goal.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire thanks your country, Madam President, for organizing this important discussion on the topic of conflict and hunger. This highly relevant theme is of great concern to the Security Council in the light of the numerous conflicts taking place in the world and the serious humanitarian crises they engender. Côte d'Ivoire also extends its gratitude to Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley for their briefings on the matter at hand.

Not a day goes by without United Nations humanitarian agencies, non-United Nations humanitarian organizations, the international media and human rights organizations issuing urgent appeals to the international community, particularly to the Organization and the Security Council, on conflict-related hunger and food insecurity. The latest report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, published in 2017, which unfortunately portrays a particularly alarming situation, clearly highlights with evidence the strong correlation between armed conflict, hunger and food insecurity, and appeals to our conscience for us to commit to collective action towards lasting conflict resolution. According to the report, 489 million of the 815 million food insecure and chronically undernourished people in the world live in conflict-affected countries, including in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

While recognizing that armed conflict and hunger are intertwined, my delegation believes that identifying root causes and the nature of conflicts could provide

a lasting solution to the problem. Certainly, finding solutions to the underlying and various causes of conflict is the best way to prevent the outbreak of conflicts and reduce the risk of food insecurity. In that context, Member States must continue their efforts to promote democracy, the rule of law and inclusive development and fight against corruption, the dividends of which will benefit the entire population.

As for the United Nations, it must continue relentlessly in the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals by encouraging Member States to prioritize food security in their policy-making by developing an agricultural policy that requires targeted investments as a matter of priority with a view to satisfying the basic needs of the populations. Such agricultural policies must also take into account the empowerment of women, who can play a leading role in strengthening food security and combating climate change. Eliminating hunger is therefore a collective responsibility that requires us, in our opinion, to fight upstream against all the factors that can lead to poverty and food crises, which constitute real threats to international peace and security.

It is regrettable to note that countries in conflict or weakened by the persistence of political crises devote a significant portion of their financial resources to military spending, to the detriment of the agricultural sector, while better targeted investments could contribute to boosting resilience to food insecurity and hunger. Furthermore, due to massive population displacements and the resulting densely populated concentrations, armed conflicts and violence lead to the overexploitation and depletion of water resources and arable lands, as well as increased strain on the environment.

As evidence of that, the region of the Lake Chad basin, which has experienced an alarming 90 per cent drop in water volume over the past 40 years, has recorded more than 2.2 million displaced people since the 2009 Boko Haram insurrection. It is undeniable that, in a context strongly marked by the effects of climate change, such massive displacements of people exacerbate the tensions between host communities and refugees for control of arable lands.

As conflicts are one of the major causes of hunger and food insecurity, we believe it is essential to work towards strengthening the resilience of State and regional actors to crises, specifically on the African continent. To that end, we must bolster cooperation among States with a view to improving the living conditions of the people who are in search of a better life.

Humanitarian access to populations facing hunger and food insecurity is a sacred right, non-respect of which constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The perpetrators of hindering international humanitarian assistance must therefore be identified and held accountable before international courts. All parties to a conflict must ensure respect for peoples' right to access humanitarian aid, which means opening and securing humanitarian corridors is essential for the delivery of such aid.

Finally, to be effective, emergency humanitarian relief must be coordinated between the structures involved in humanitarian operations, in addition to being associated with long-term development goals in order to address structural development challenges, such as youth employment and social cohesion.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and for the briefings by Mr. Mark Lowcock and Mr. David Beasley, as well as the concept note prepared for this occasion. We especially want to welcome the presence of Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands.

Peru notes with deep concern the increase in humanitarian crises throughout the world and in famine, which threatens millions of people in conflict-affected countries, such as Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as in the Sahel and parts of Syria. Clearly, today's conflicts, which are taking place in a globalized and interdependent world, have increasingly devastating and complex humanitarian consequences and are a major cause of the alarming increase in famines. It is also clear that famines and situations of extreme poverty and neglect by institutions in general may become root causes of conflicts. They generate conditions conducive to violent extremism and terrorism, as well as to the recruitment of young people and children by armed groups.

The vicious cycle of poverty and hunger, violence and conflict is reflected in dramatic increases in human vulnerability. Children are especially vulnerable to the impact of malnutrition. Women are exposed to sexual blackmail for food, among other abuses. Displaced persons and refugees generate additional challenges.

The theses of Amartya Sen and other social scientists indicate that good governance and accountability could prevent famines. That perspective is also consistent with the concept of sustainable peace, which aims to build inclusive institutions in order to prevent conflicts and address their root causes. In that vein, we believe that the promotion of labour-intensive agricultural development is key, especially in rural areas, to ensure food security and prevent the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of conflicts.

We highlight the need for more consistent and coordinated action by the United Nations system, in particular with regard to its humanitarian assistance operations, support for sustainable development and peacekeeping on the ground. As far as possible, food assistance must rely on locally produced foods.

In accordance with international humanitarian law, the Security Council has the responsibility of ensuring sustained, safe, rapid and unhindered access to assistance in areas affected by conflicts and famines. That includes essential imports and the protection of the civil infrastructure needed for their distribution.

In addition to promoting political solutions to conflicts, the Council must respond firmly to violations of international humanitarian law involving obstacles to access to humanitarian assistance and to the atrocious crime of using hunger as a weapon of war. To that end, the Secretariat should inform the Council in a systematic and timely way about the risks of famine associated with conflicts and about any obstacles to access to humanitarian assistance and identify those responsible. That should trigger specific sanctions, including criminal punishment, within the framework of due process. We also believe that food should be distributed by women in order to prevent cases of sexual blackmail and other abuses.

We wish to conclude by welcoming international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and indicate the urgency of immediately disbursing the promised funds. We also want to highlight the professionalism and commitment of the humanitarian workers of the United Nations system and other agencies.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We are happy to see you, Madam President, presiding over this briefing. I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and David Beasley of the World Food Programme for sharing their views on the link between conflict and hunger and their experience in the field. We want to express appreciation to both for the very good work they and their respective institutions and programmes have been doing.

We recognize that slow and sudden-onset disasters, including the impact of climate change, continue to be one of the major triggers of food insecurity and hunger in different parts of the world. As recognized in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, disaster-induced food insecurity and hunger have an impact on the overall development of a country and require a development-oriented solution supported by enhanced international cooperation. In our view, these issues should continue to be considered within their primary forums, particularly the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Unresolved conflicts and certain measures taken by parties to an armed conflict also continue to exacerbate hunger and food insecurity in different parts of the world. Lack of progress in resolving some pressing conflict situations have also led to serious humanitarian crises, including hunger and chronic food insecurity. We are of the view that the focus of the Council, including today's briefing and possible follow-up, should be limited to conflict-exacerbated hunger and food insecurity. In that regard, we would like to underline the following five points.

First, preventing conflict-exacerbated food insecurity and hunger in different parts of the world requires addressing the root causes of conflicts and finding durable solutions aimed at preventing further relapses. It is important for the Council to use all available tools at its disposal, including through enhanced engagement with regional and subregional organizations, with a view to preventing and addressing the root causes of conflicts in different parts of the world. In that regard, of course, nothing meaningful can be done without some level of unity within the Council. That might seem trivial because of repetition, but it is a fact that cannot be denied.

Secondly, pending durable solutions for the root causes of conflicts, the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance to civilians remains critical. While recognizing the minimal role of development actors and development-oriented solutions in conflict situations, humanitarian actors indeed play a significant role in responding to food insecurity in complex

situations. However, securing humanitarian access has become a major challenge and has been one of the issues that we keep on discussing in the consideration of various conflict situations. In some situations, the Council has been trying to facilitate humanitarian access. In that regard, one cannot deny that political differences have proved to be major obstacles, while highlighting again the need to prioritize the unity of the Council. How we can prioritize addressing humanitarian tragedies, hunger and famine in the face of deep political differences is the major challenge the world faces today and that appears to be extremely self-evident.

Thirdly, peacekeeping missions continue to play a significant role in the safe provision of humanitarian assistance and facilitating humanitarian access. It is also important to note that a lack of or limited resources have, over the years, impacted the role of peacekeeping missions to that end, thereby limiting their contribution to efforts aimed at the prevention of conflict-induced food insecurity and hunger. In our view, that requires further consideration by the Council.

Fourthly, the Security Council could use some of the subsidiary bodies, such as the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict or mandated sanctions committees, to reduce and prevent conflict-induced human suffering, starvation, hunger or food insecurity.

In conclusion, we believe that respecting the principles of complementarity among the various United Nations organs is important to ensure achieving the goals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations across the Organization's various pillars. That is why we believe there is a need for caution to avoid overstretching the discussion and for limiting its scope to conflict-exacerbated hunger and food insecurity. Given that, using hunger as a weapon of war is a gross violation of international law, which should be vehemently condemned.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome today's presence of Her Excellency Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands. Likewise, we express our gratitude for the briefings by Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and by Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, to whom we would like to take this opportunity to express our unwavering support for the important work that they do.

Food insecurity and the risk of famine in the world are undoubtedly a problem that must concern us all and include the involvement and joint action of the entire international community so that they may be prevented and mitigated through cross-cutting and comprehensive measures, especially now, as we are on the path to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, the predicament created by famine is more worrisome when one of its causes and a main factor of its persistence are the direct result of armed conflicts and man-made violence. A tragic example of the latter are the 74 million people at risk of acute food insecurity who live in conflict areas, primarily in Africa and the Middle East. Unfortunately, other victims who, upon escaping violent situations, have abandoned their homes and means of subsistence are dramatically adding to the already alarming number of forcibly displaced persons and account for more than 65 million people throughout the world, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

On the one hand, the constant flow of displaced persons and refugees has undeniably resulted in the stoppage of agricultural activities and the breakdown of production cycles, as well as the loss of land and livestock, thereby affecting the sustainable supply of basic foodstuffs. While, on the other hand, it has had a severe impact upon communities and States that receive those refugees and displaced persons, as they try the latters' ability ensure their subsistence and provide them with sufficient food. In some instances, that fragile situation is further worsened owing to the fact that, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, actors involved in and parties to conflicts impose arbitrary restrictions on access roads, ports and airports by which imported food and basic humanitarian assistance arrives to meet the needs of the people, as well as target humanitarian assistance as military objectives — a practice that we condemn in the strongest of terms. Armed conflicts are also responsible for explosive remnants of war contaminating vast tracks of land that could otherwise be used for agriculture.

It is important to consider that the high humanitarian cost that conflicts entail goes hand-in-had with policies aimed at waging war and the excessive military expenses that they entail, and that they regrettably perpetuate a cycle of poverty directly affecting the people. It is clear

that the presence of famine in conflict areas is not owing to a lack of resources for obtaining food, but to the lack of parties' political will to resolve their differences. In that regard, my delegation calls on the Security Council and the membership of the Organization, in general, to maintain a united and firm stand in condemning acts and campaigns of violence and belligerence that worsen current conflicts and create harmful instability posing a threat to the lives of millions of innocent people.

As Executive Director Beasley stated earlier, Bolivia believes unequivocally that the best way to avoid and stop the perpetuation of the vicious cycle of war, conflict, famine and humanitarian catastrophes lies essentially in prevention. The effective application of mediation, negotiation, prevention and conciliation for the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as the pre-eminent use of the provisions set forth in Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, are indispensable to advance analysis and comprehensive debate on conflicts, their root causes and their possible consequences. Clearly, prevention must be considered as an asset at the service of the people to strengthen, and not to weaken or diminish, States. Accordingly, we believe that the use of reports and briefings on food insecurity and hunger that include status reports on conflict areas, such as the *Global Report on Food Crises*, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, and the European Commission report on the same subject presented yesterday, are useful tools for prevention and providing early warning of potential situations whereby crises might worsen. It is also important that, within the framework of their respective mandates, specific United Nations bodies work in coordination with the various agencies and programmes responsible for monitoring levels of food supplies, particularly in conflict areas, so that strengthening humanitarian assistance can be planned for in a cross-cutting manner and efforts to ensure post-conflict resilience are supported.

Lastly, we highlight the content of presidential statement S/PRST/2017/14, of August 2017, which reiterates that reports the Secretary General can provide on humanitarian situations and responses, in particular the risk of famine in areas affected by conflicts, are extremely important in designing and implementing prevention mechanisms.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): As we heard this morning, the number of women, men and children in our world who are suffering from food insecurity is increasing. At the same time, more and more people are living in areas torn apart by war and conflict. This we see every day in the Security Council. As this year's *Global Report on Food Crises* sets out, those are not separate trends. The links between conflict and hunger are clear and undeniable. Over the past year, in the 18 countries where 74 million, or 60 per cent, of those in acute need live, conflict and insecurity were the main driver of food insecurity. Conflict often also prevents humanitarian access. At the same time, food insecurity can trigger conflict, thereby creating a vicious cycle. As we heard this morning from Mr. Lowcock, hunger today is used as a weapon of war.

Let me therefore begin by thanking the Dutch presidency, and you, Madam, for organizing today's meeting on this important issue, which we cannot ignore if we are to meet our responsibilities to maintain international peace and security. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Executive Director Beasley for their candid and forthright briefings today. They have clearly outlined the challenges that they and their partners face on a daily basis as they seek to meet the needs of people who are trapped by mutually reinforcing conflict and hunger across the world. They also pointed out opportunities represented by the Council effectively shouldering its responsibilities.

Last year, the Secretary-General came to us and warned that 20 million people were at risk of famine. In response, the Council heeded his early warning and took early action to avoid disaster. Working together, the international community managed to avert famine, and we demonstrated the important role that the Council has to play. However, as I said yesterday during the briefing on the Lake Chad basin (see S/PV.8212), our actions have addressed only the acute symptoms of such crises. The situation for millions of people around the world remains perilous. In South Sudan, for example, the protracted conflict has led to a shocking rise in hunger. While outright famine might have been averted, many individuals are suffering from famine-like conditions. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, with women often being the first to sacrifice their food consumption for others in the family. Continued fighting and displacement have disrupted planting and harvesting, which means that next year there will be less food once again, thereby making it still more unaffordable.

Food insecurity is being exacerbated by economic collapse. Seven million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance. Even when food is available and humanitarians are ready to respond, assistance to people in need is impeded and denied due to access restrictions. The vicious cycle is now all too familiar and all too common. In Somalia, violence and conflict, combined with severe droughts, continue to cause mass displacement. The denial of access is hindering an effective response aimed at reaching 6.2 million people. In Yemen, the disrupted and restricted delivery of humanitarian assistance is affecting the 22.2 million Yemenis desperately in need of humanitarian aid. More decisive and long-term action is clearly needed. How should the Council respond?

First, the role of the Council is to maintain international peace and security, which entails preventing conflicts, effectively working for their cessation and contributing to sustaining peace. The prevention of conflict requires a proactive approach to addressing the deeper, underlying risks that prevent sustainable development and peace. In order to efficiently address the root causes and complex drivers of conflict, such as those discussed today, we must better understand the risks. Regular reporting on food insecurity and early warning indications from agencies, such as the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, serve to highlight the link between conflict and food insecurity. The Council can then take greater proactive action to prevent human suffering.

Secondly, the Council also has an important role to play in upholding and ensuring respect for international law, including international humanitarian law. That includes calling on parties to armed conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian objects, including objects necessary for food production and distribution, and firmly condemning them when such basic norms are not respected. Parties must refrain from attacking or rendering useless objects such as foodstuffs, agriculture areas, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies.

Another fundamental element of ensuring respect for international law includes ensuring rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need of such assistance. Arbitrarily denying humanitarian access to people in need is a violation of international humanitarian law. Starvation as a method of warfare is outlawed and unacceptable. As we have heard today from previous speakers, accountability for violations of those fundamental norms is critical. The Council must play its full role in ensuring that its demands are adhered to.

Adequate and flexible funding is also essential for an effective and swift humanitarian response. Sweden is a long-standing donor to the Central Emergency Response Fund and all United Nations humanitarian appeals. We call on others to contribute in order to ensure that sufficient funding is available for time-critical assistance and protection for civilians in need. However, humanitarian assistance should only be a short-term solution to the immediate crisis. To break the vicious cycle of hunger and conflict, we must invest in building sustainable peace, allowing farmers to return to their lands to rebuild their livelihoods and for sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems to re-emerge.

In conclusion, the duty the Secretary-General entrusted to the Council last year is far from completed. In the presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/14) adopted in August last year, facilitated by Sweden, the Council committed to working with the Secretary-General to pursue all possible avenues to end conflicts and to take action to avert famine in conflict-affected countries. We look forward to continued updates from the Secretary-General on the matter. The Council must remain seized of the issuse and consider further action.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Today our briefers have sounded the alarm and warned us of the surging levels of acute hunger, which are largely attributable to conflict. But that is not for the first time. More than a year ago, the Secretary-General drew the Council's attention to the change in the long-term trend in global hunger: it was then rising for the first time in a decade. He stated that the situation was critical. The United Nations predicted four simultaneous famines, threatening the lives of 20 million people. Through the generosity of donors and the actions of humanitarian and development organizations, international financial institutions and regional Governments, famine itself was prevented or, at least, contained.

But let us be clear. Over the past year, suffering and hunger have increased. In the world today, one out of every nine people is undernourished. That is a total of 815 million people — an increase of 38 million in the past year. Conflict is the main reason for that increase in hunger. Sixty per cent of hungry and malnourished

people live in countries affected by conflict. Almost 75 per cent of the world's 155 million stunted children under the age of five live in countries affected by conflict. It is the most vulnerable, in particular women and children, who are most affected by hunger. Those statistics indicate that the actions we have taken in the past year to reduce hunger have not been enough. As so clearly stated by our briefers, we must examine and address the root causes of the severe hunger crisis if we hope to put an end to it.

Last August, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/14) that for the first time acknowledged that hunger and conflict are linked. That was a step forward, but it provides us with only half the picture. In the statement the Security Council emphasized:

> "with deep concern that ongoing conflicts and violence have devastating humanitarian consequences and hinder an effective humanitarian response in the short, medium and long term and are therefore a major cause of famine".

It reads as if hunger is just an inevitable consequence of war or a by-product of the changing nature of conflict, but that is clearly not the case. Hunger does not need to be a product of war. I hope we can make that clear in future Council products. We must understand and acknowledge the true nature of the problem in order to take the necessary collective actions to break the deadly link between conflict and hunger. In that regard, we see three key areas of responsibility for the Council.

First, we must redouble efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and build and sustain peace. Secondly, we must uphold international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We are quickly approaching a new normal where warring parties believe it is acceptable to destroy crops, interrupt markets and attack water points, hospitals and schools. Too often, there is a lack of accountability for State actors and other parties to conflict who are responsible for increasing hunger. Thirdly, we must actively safeguard humanitarian access. In almost all of the crises before the Council, people are denied or are unable to access essential aid, often with the most vulnerable people being the worst affected. The Security Council can, and must, play a key role to enable the safe, unhindered and rapid access of populations to humanitarian assistance. We must engage with national and regional authorities to apply diplomatic pressure and insist on the removal of access constraints. We must also pursue accountability for any violations.

We must think creatively when responding to the crisis. For example, to identify the most serious cases of obstructed access objectively, we could use a model that articulates access in terms of needs met by the delivery of health-care protection and education, rather than simply by the number of aid convoys. We could also include the denial of access in the design of sanctions mandated by the Council more routinely.

We are extremely grateful to you, Madam President, and to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for convening today's meeting, because it is a subject about which the United Kingdom — the third-largest humanitarian donor — cares deeply and in which it is deeply engaged. The scale of the challenge we face is clear. The threat of famine remains. In a world of abundance, 815 million people are still hungry. Their hunger is used as a weapon of war. We must act and use the tools at our disposal to show the world that it is not acceptable and that we around this table do not accept it. We must seek accountability and make the consequences of those appalling actions clear.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank you, Madam President, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for convening today's meeting, and we congratulate you on your presidency. We also thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings and for the tireless efforts of their agencies to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly given the increasing number of violent conflicts around the world over the past 10 years. That has been evident in the countries that are facing food insecurity. The data show that in 2017, 124 million in 51 countries were affected by acute food insecurity. According to the *Global Report on Food Crises 2018*, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, that is an increase of 11 million people as compared to the previous year.

More than a year ago, on 21 February 2017, the Secretary-General sent a letter to Member States in which he highlighted the world food crisis and the risk of famine in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. He also warned that if decisive action was not taken, more than 20 million people in

those countries would face the risk of famine within six months. The Security Council therefore began paying more attention to the risk of famine in many countries on its agenda. On 9 August 2017, the Security Council issued presidential statement S/PRST/2017/14, in which it expressed its grave concern about the risk of famine and called on Member States to provide resources and funding to prevent that possibility. The international community responded rapidly to the Secretary-General's appeal, donating approximately 70 per cent of the required funds by October 2017, when the Secretary-General reviewed the most recent developments related to the risk of famine and a world food crisis in the Security Council (see S/PV.8069). The State of Kuwait also responded by donating $15 million towards addressing the food insecurity crisis in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. In our deliberations today, I would like to underscore three of the main elements in the link between hunger and conflict — prevention, compliance and urgent action.

First, on prevention, we believe that the aspect of morality should be paramount in addressing food insecurity. There can be no moral justification for allowing people or groups to die of hunger. The early warning from the Secretary-General is part of the interaction between the Security Council and the Secretary-General and helps us to guard against the advent of serious humanitarian crises, especially those driven by conflict. We should take into account the fact that the effective and speedy implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals will help to prevent future conflicts resulting from hunger. We should also focus on addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, climate change and inequality. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that one of the first of the Sustainable Development Goals is eradicating hunger, which is achievable given the abundant resources in the world today.

Secondly, with regard to compliance, respect for international law is crucial to breaking the link between conflict and hunger. We should ensure respect for international humanitarian law in situations of conflict. The Security Council has a number of measures at its disposal to ensure such respect when Member States fail to fulfil their obligations, such as encouraging parties to a conflict to comply with international law and the relevant resolutions, including civilian protection mandates in peacekeeping operations and establishing impartial investigations and accountability mechanisms. Where there are violations and disregard for such international norms, hunger and poverty increase people's need for humanitarian assistance. When peace prevails, there is less need for humanitarian assistance. Conflicts are man-made and are a driver of misery. Political settlements, preventive diplomacy and addressing the root causes are therefore the best solutions.

Despite our collective efforts to prevent famine in many countries, the food-insecurity crisis continues. Many people throughout the world, particularly women and children, are unable to meet their basic needs. The risk of famine has highlighted the need for better coordination and increased early-warning mechanisms. The State of Kuwait stands ready to work with other Member States in actively contributing to international efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution to the problem of conflict-related hunger around the world.

Mr. Kononuchenko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to welcome you, Madam President, to today's meeting of the Security Council. We thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings assessing the issue of food security in countries in situations of conflict. We have also taken note of the reports published by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on this topic following presidential statement S/PRST/2017/14, issued by the Security Council in August last year.

As those reports rightly note, armed conflicts are by no means the only reason for the increasing numbers of hungry people in the world, although they undoubtedly have a negative impact on the ability to ensure food security for needy populations. However, we see a clear desire on the part of some countries to entrench and promote the link between conflict and hunger both in the work of the Security Council and more generally. We feel that is problematic chiefly because in practice it effectively pushes the key drivers of food insecurity — volatile world food prices, global economic stagnation, unequal access to agricultural and agro-industrial technology, lack of investment, weak progress in the areas of sustainable consumption and production, unfavourable weather conditions and others — into the background. There

is no justification for ignoring such factors, especially their underlying causes.

In response to that, it is argued that a focus on conflict favours strict compliance with the Security Council's mandate. If our colleagues are indeed guided by that objective, we can only welcome such efforts, since we ourselves consistently object to overburdening the Security Council's agenda with issues beyond its purview. However, we have participated in a series of discussions on the links between hunger and conflict, and having studied the arguments for possible response measures on the part of the Council, we have concluded that considering this issue generally cannot be productive. Each conflict has its own specific characteristics, participants, reality and plans for a resolution. It is hardly likely that we in the Security Council will be able to come up with some universal formula — a panacea, if you like — for solving the problem of food security in such circumstances. We have not heard any groundbreaking ideas in that regard so far. Basically, all the proposals boil down to affirming and reaffirming the principles of international humanitarian law, but that work is already being done in the framework of country-specific topics. Where is the added value in this case?

In that connection, we firmly maintain the position that the Security Council should consider problems of food security only in the context of specific country situations that pose a threat to international peace and security. There are qualified experts working on all of these situations who can make objective assessments of the causes underlying local threats in the area of food security support and propose various solutions, assuming any are possible. The same applies to the international legal aspects of hunger in the context of conflicts. The Security Council's responses should be planned and implemented in conjunction with the country dossiers that the Council addresses. Incidentally, all four issues that the President outlined today are being attended to within the framework of country-specific areas that are on the Council's agenda. We are ready for more active collaboration with experts from the United Nations specialized agencies within the framework of existing formats and negotiation platforms.

With regard to the humanitarian response to threats related to food security, we would like to express our gratitude to the humanitarian organizations that have been taking steps to prevent hunger in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. Unfortunately, the situation in those countries remains tense, which does not exclude the possibility that the alarming situation that arose last year will recur. We will continue to provide donor support to the efforts of the WFP, the FAO and their partner organizations. We hope that their activities will always be conducted in accordance with the humanitarian principles defined in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

We believe that as a rule, freely interpreting those principles and exploiting the humanitarian agenda for short-term military and political purposes in practice lead only to increasingly confrontational rhetoric, politicization and thereby to aggravating the suffering of the millions of people who have become victims of protracted military conflicts — and the famous "fighters for justice and democracy" have played a not insignificant role in fuelling those conflicts. It is worth adding something about the consequences of the unilateral sanctions and economic blockade policies of certain countries, including self-styled humanitarian rights champions. All of us, including humanitarian agency personnel, are familiar with the negative effects that such irresponsible measures can have for entirely innocent populations, to the discredit of the initiators of such steps. We hope that these factors that are aggravating the humanitarian situation will receive as much attention as all the others in our public work.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased to see you here in the Chamber again, Madam President, and we would like to thank the Netherlands for convening today's meeting on such an important subject. I would also like to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their thorough briefings on the relationship between conflict and hunger around the world, as well as the ongoing efforts to alleviate the suffering that those two terrible problems inflict on their victims.

Armed conflicts are one of the main obstacles to the realization of the right to adequate nourishment in many parts of the world, since they often interrupt the various stages of the production, harvesting and distribution of food. In Africa, where the livelihoods of 60 per cent of the population depend on agriculture, conflicts can have a disastrous effect on their countries' economies and plans for sustainable development. Equatorial Guinea is deeply concerned about the increasing exploitation of hunger in armed conflict.

It is a deplorable fact that in the twenty-first century, 11 per cent of the world's population — 815 million people — are suffering from hunger or starvation, and that more than half of those people — 489 million — are living in situations of armed conflict. And of all them, 243 million are African and represent 20 per cent of the continent's total population.

Through the implementation of our Horizon 2020 national plan, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, my Government is continuing to work to achieve the total eradication of hunger in Equatorial Guinea and Africa as a whole. Our brother countries are making similar efforts. However, one of the challenges in our subregion is in helping to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflicts in two of those brother countries, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where some 7 million people are affected, many of them displaced and exposed to hunger. That situation is complicated by the porous borders between our countries and the presence of terrorist organizations and armed rebel groups that exploit this vulnerability for illegal purposes.

Despite the progress that African countries have made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and preserve peace, there are 215 million hungry people in Africa, where eight of the 15 United Nations peacekeeping missions are also located. Although there are fewer conflicts between countries globally, the numbers of internal conflicts are growing and are exacerbated by the presence and intervention of terrorist and extremist groups. Exploiting hunger and access to food and humanitarian aid as weapons of war in these situations is deplorable and Equatorial Guinea vehemently condemns such practices.

While conflicts are determining factors in 10 of the 13 worst food security crises in the world, they are not necessarily the cause of such crises, or the only one. Conflicts themselves also result from poverty and a lack of access to basic needs such as food, from the lack of opportunities that enable countries to achieve equitable economic growth and sustainable development in areas such as the industrialization of the agricultural sector, which supports two thirds of Africa's population, a lack of access to markets, and abnormal climatic events such as El Niño. For those reasons, Equatorial Guinea encourages the international community to consolidate its efforts to ensure the sustainable financing of the zero-hunger Sustainable Development Goal, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the African Union's 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea welcomes the recent plans to strengthen the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations to end hunger in Africa by 2025. We also note that Equatorial Guinea and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have established the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund, which has been fully funded to the tune of $30 million.

Equatorial Guinea commends the courageous work of humanitarian personnel and condemns all attacks on them as well as violations of international humanitarian law with regard to the protection of civilians. We believe that in order to ensure the protection during conflicts of the most vulnerable civilians, such as women, children and people with disabilities, and of humanitarian personnel, the Security Council, while always respecting States' sovereignty, should redouble its efforts to find ways to resolve conflicts through dialogue and uphold international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, Equatorial Guinea endorses the recommendations of the 9 August 2017 presidential statement on this topic (S/PRST/2017/14). We encourage the various United Nations agencies, especially those dedicated to humanitarian work and development cooperation in order to help prevent conflict and maintain peace following conflict, to work more closely with one another and with regional and subregional organizations, as well as with States, to find sustainable solutions.

We call on international public opinion and the private, business and academic sectors to continue to seek solutions to food waste. The 2015 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization report entitled *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* noted that a 25 per cent reduction in food waste in developed nations would cover the needs of the 870 million people worldwide who suffer from hunger. Let us get to work.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Minister Kaag, for joining us today and for convening this important meeting. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Executive Director Beasley for their always cogent and pointed presentations. We appreciate their ongoing contributions to the work of the Security Council.

The connection between hunger and armed conflict is undeniable. The majority of the world's hungry people today live in conflict-affected States, and that number is growing. That means people are starving not because of a drought or a natural disaster, but because conflicts are preventing food from getting to those who desperately need it. This is a man-made food security crisis.

Hunger and war zones quickly turns into a vicious cycle. Relentless violence, which defines far too many conflicts today, drives countless civilians from their homes, fields and livelihoods. Fighters prevent food from getting to those in need or destroy the markets and the infrastructure needed to distribute food. This wave of hunger forces more people to flee their homes, who often cross borders in search of ways to feed their loved ones. Or they take up arms to fight back against the forces that are starving them. Fighting gets worse and then still more people go hungry. Therefore, conflict causes hunger and hunger leads to more conflict. This cycle is devastating, but because hunger and conflict is a man-made crisis, we have the power to solve it. We on the Security Council, together with all responsible Members of the United Nations, can act to keep civilians from starving. At an absolute minimum, we must demand an end to medieval and barbaric siege tactics, arbitrary denials of humanitarian access and attacks that violate international law, humanitarian law and human rights law. The connection between these violations and threats to international peace and security is also undeniable, and an equally appropriate topic for the Council.

In South Sudan, the situation became so extreme last year that famine was declared in certain parts of the country. The Government of South Sudan and other armed groups blocked the World Food Programme and other humanitarian agencies from reaching civilians with life-saving aid. For years, fighters from all sides slaughtered and plundered livestock, and they have assaulted and murdered women and children who leave internally displaced persons camps to search for food. Civilians who fear for their lives have chosen to stay hidden in marshes, eating nothing but plants in order to avoid being killed by armed groups. Although we narrowly managed to avert famine last year in South Sudan, the forecast for the year ahead has only worsened. The threat of famine will remain as long as the parties continue paying no regard to the basic welfare or basic human rights of the South Sudanese people.

In Syria, the Al-Assad regime and its backers have relentlessly used sieges and starvation to pummel the civilian population in opposition areas. For years, the regime has denied even the most basic deliveries of food aid to hundreds of thousands of civilians in besieged areas, including right now, in blatant defiance of conflict resolution 2401 (2018). The Council has spoken at length about the Al-Assad regime's actions in Syria, and we will not repeat all the details here. But as we saw in eastern Ghouta, despite the Council's demand for a ceasefire, the regime decided to cut off deliveries of food and medicine and unleash an all-out assault on the nearly 400,000 people living there. Denying the people of eastern Ghouta food was a key part of the Al-Assad regime strategy. This is a barbaric tactic that any responsible member of the Council must stand up and condemn. We will not stop working to hold Al-Assad and his backers accountable for trying to starve the Syrian people into submission.

Yemen has become the world's largest food security emergency by number of people in need. Again, the link between conflict and hunger is obvious. Fighting has decimated Yemen's economy, which means Yemen cannot import enough food for the country's people. Yemen is 90 per cent dependent on imports for food, so the disruption caused war, quickly leading to a devastating hunger crisis.

There is no question that all parties must allow unhindered humanitarian access to help alleviate those needs. But for Yemen, humanitarian aid is not enough. Agencies like the World Food Programme cannot tackle hunger in Yemen on their own. We also need to protect the support and flow of life-saving commercial imports of food. If we improve humanitarian access and facilitate imports, we can start to address Yemen's dire needs. That is why the United States supported the delivery of mobile cranes to Al-Hudaydah port, and why we continue to promote the work of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen. The United States welcomes Saudi Arabia's recent commitments to expand the delivery of humanitarian and commercial goods. We look forward to the plans for their development with humanitarian partners and encourage a rapid expansion of access.

Hunger and conflict are also linked in the Lake Chad basin. The terror of Boko Haram and the West African affiliate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) has devastated communities throughout the region. Their continued terror prolongs the

humanitarian crisis and displacement of millions who face food insecurity and the very real threat of famine. The United States continues to work closely with Nigeria and its neighbours to defeat Boko Haram and ISIS in West Africa once and for all. But we need to make sure that the fight does not exacerbate food insecurity for civilians. That is why we urge Nigeria and the other Governments of the Lake Chad basin to step up their cooperation with humanitarian agencies.

A successful response to the crisis depends on access to the communities in need throughout the entire region. We reiterate calls on Governments of the region to do all they can to help secure and maintain that access. They can also do more to bolster grass-roots support for the international humanitarian response by reinstating legitimate Governments across the region and reassuring the region's people that they have a just and secure future in their home communities. To echo our Ethiopian friends, that means the Council needs to take a more serious approach to conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy rather than waiting to act until a situation reaches a full-blown emergency.

When conflict is the common denominator for so many places that are food insecure, this issue must be on the Council's agenda. The specifics of each conflict may be different, but we must acknowledge how often the denial or violation of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms are at the root of these conflicts. If the Security Council is to live up to its mandate, we must be consistent, principled and strong in demanding that conflict should be no excuse for perpetuating hunger, and the prevention of such conflicts should be our highest goal.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, the delegation of Kazakhstan would like to express appreciation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for convening today's briefing. We are particularly pleased to see you, Minister Kaag, presiding over today's meeting. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. David Beasley, for their very insightful briefings on the stark and painful reality of the suffering caused by conflict and hunger.

The statistics we are hearing today are shocking and should awaken our conscience, because what we witness today is the worst food security crisis since the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations. After a prolonged decline, world hunger appears to be on the rise again, leading to the re-emergence of famine. According to the latest edition of the *Global Report on Food Crises*, published yesterday, the vast majority of the chronically food insecure and malnourished live in countries affected by conflicts. The 11 per cent increase in the number of food-insecure people in 2017 is largely attributable to new or newly intensified conflicts combined with droughts and floods. Ongoing armed conflict and violence impede livelihoods and access to markets and create widespread displacement, which is further aggravated by climate change. Moreover, it is obvious that unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, the unsustainable use of land and water and the exploitation of natural resources further escalate the potential of widespread food insecurity. While we express grave concern, we need to go beyond expressions of solidarity and immediately address the problem with the following workable strategies.

First, it is clear that the response to food insecurity and hunger requires strengthened connections between political solutions and long-term development strategies. We need to strengthen the security/development nexus through implementation of development programmes in conflict areas, including making major investments in rural development and agriculture, natural-resources management and social protection.

Secondly, we must strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention and resolve situations of conflict, including through the implementation of the proposals set out in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (S/2018/43). Instead of having to respond to crises, we need to greatly increase our investments in prevention. The Security Council underlined the importance of that principle by adopting, last August, a presidential statement that reiterates the Council's commitment to working with the Secretary-General to pursue all possible avenues to end conflicts, including through addressing their underlying root causes in an inclusive and sustainable manner (S/PRST/2017/14).

Thirdly, it is of vital importance that the Secretary-General and the Secretariat alert the Security Council on worrying levels of food insecurity and hunger, including through existing reporting mechanisms. Because of the Secretary-General's early warning in February 2017 and a swift humanitarian response,

famine was averted in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and the north-east of Nigeria.

Fourthly, we must enhance coordination both within the United Nations and with regional and subregional organizations and financial organizations, in order to address immediate needs, the recovery stage, long-term development and sustaining peace in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. All those institutions have different tools and expertise that should be used in a complementary way to achieve desired outcomes.

Fifthly, we need not only to respect, but also ensure respect for, international humanitarian law by providing full, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access. This is a process to be engaged in by the entire United Nations system, in particular its peacekeeping missions and country teams, working with both Governments and armed groups. We should also seek the support of neighbouring countries with influence for their timely interventions, along with donors, partners and, most of all, civil society and local populations.

Last but not least, we cannot tolerate or consider the food-insecurity and hunger situation with an attitude of business as usual. Urgent collective efforts are needed if the international community wants to achieve the ambitious goal of a world without hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes you to New York, Madam President, to preside over today's open meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. Beasley, for their briefings.

For some time now, some African and West Asian countries and regions have seen droughts and the effects of climate change, among other challenges, and have suffered from severe famine. Helping the countries concerned to cope with famine and settle the issue will help eliminate the root causes of war and conflict. The United Nations, the World Food Programme and other relevant agencies have made great efforts to alleviate disasters, which China greatly appreciates. The international community should continue to provide help to the countries and regions concerned.

First, it is necessary to promote inclusive and balanced development that benefits all. Development is a top priority and the fundamental policy objective if various global issues are to be resolved. The United Nations system must play a coordinating role to promote the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, give priority to the elimination of poverty and hunger and continue to increase input into the development of developing countries. The principles of extensive consultation, joint contributions and shared benefits should be adopted in global governance to guide the globalization of the economy towards healthy development, properly respond to climate change issues and actively help developing countries to enhance their capacity for independent development with a view to achieving development.

Secondly, efforts should be stepped up for the resolution of regional hotspot issues to help the regions in conflict realize peace and stability at an early date and embark on the road to sustainable development. The Security Council and the international community should have a greater sense of urgency in finding political solutions to relevant hotspot issues, act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, assist countries in conflict in advancing the peace process and national reconciliation and in resolving their disputes through such peaceful means as dialogue and consultation, with a view to building together a world of lasting peace and universal security for all to share and to create a good environment for common development.

Thirdly, all United Nations organs should perform their respective functions and observe the division of labour while strengthening cooperation. The Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security issues, should focus its efforts on helping relevant countries and regions to respond to peace and security issues, while the World Food Programme and the United Nations humanitarian agencies should respond to the needs of Member States in a timely manner and actively carry out food aid and other humanitarian relief activities. The strengths of and the roles played by regional and subregional organizations should be fully tapped to foster synergy in the international community to resolve the problem of famine.

China remains committed to the resolution of disputes to dialogue and consultation and plays a positive and constructive role in seeking political settlements for international and regional hotspot issues. In the meantime, China is actively helping other developing countries in poverty eradication and the elimination of

hunger. In 2017, China actively fulfilled its international obligations by providing non-stop multiple batches of emergency food assistance to 38 countries in Africa and Asia and to four international organizations through mulitilateral and bilateral channels. We have also carried out 158 projects of various kinds under the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization and other international organizations, effectively alleviating disaster situations in relevant countries and regions. China stands ready to continue to work with the international community to promote the building of a community of shared future for humankind and make our contributions for achieving lasting peace and common prosperity in the world.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock and Mr. David Beasley for their very comprehensive briefings. I would also like to congratulate the Netherlands, treasurer of the Group of Friends on Food and Nutrition Security, for initiating a series of discussions on conflict and hunger. We need to continue this debate and raise the interlinked issues of conflict and hunger in various relevant international forums.

I would like to quote a South African proverb: "Abundance does not spread; famine does". Indeed, we are observing a worrying trend: after declining for more than two decades, hunger is on the rise again. Moreover, estimates predict a further deterioration in food security, which is threatening the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 2, namely, to end hunger by 2030.

Africa and the Middle East are especially affected by famine. In particular, we notice that the deteriorating situation in such countries as South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, specifically its north-eastern region, Mali, Syria and Iraq. Hunger, undernutrition and food insecurity are to a large degree the result of conflict. They are on the rise and are closely interlinked with famine and food crises. Conflict and hunger reinforce each other. The vast majority of malnourished people worldwide live in countries affected by conflict. Ten of the 13 major food crises in the world were driven by conflict. More than half of the population in conflict-affected countries live in rural areas, where livelihoods depend largely on agriculture and land and livestock are two key agricultural assets.

Hunger and undernutrition are significantly worse where conflicts are prolonged. On the other hand, food insecurity itself can trigger violence and instability, particularly in conflicts marked by inequality and fragile institutions. The link between conflict and hunger is complex and therefore requires a comprehensive response and a collaborative approach. In keeping with the Council's presidential statement issued in August 2017 (S/PRST/2017/14), Poland is strongly committed to working with the Secretary-General to pursue all possible avenues to ending conflict, including through addressing its the root causes in an inclusive and sustainable manner. We are convinced that in order for the Security Council to ensure early action, we need an early-warning information system on food insecurity and hunger and on any escalation of deepening conflicts.

This largely depends on access. Our main goal should be to protect civilians in armed conflict and ensure that their basic needs are met. This is of the utmost importance in discussing the deterioration of the situation in, for example, Syria. Access to adequate food, or the right to food, is a core human rights and binding on all States. We should promote its better implementation; in this regard, we cannot stress enough the importance of respect for international humanitarian law.

Another issue is the accountability of States or parties to armed conflict, as well as individuals, that violate international humanitarian law by using food insecurity and starvation as a method of warfare or through attacks on food-producing factories or destroying crop fields. Such violations must be investigated and the perpetrators held to account.

In conclusion, I should like once again to thank the Netherlands for having convened this meeting and to reiterate Poland's commitment to continuing to work to reduce conflict and hunger worldwide.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to thank you for having convened this meeting of the Security Council to address the link between hunger and conflict. I wish also to thank Mark Lowcock and David Beasley for their briefings.

The Secretary-General was the first to alert us, in February 2017, as to the tragic humanitarian situation of the almost 20 million people in Africa and in Yemen on the brink of famine. His observation was clear: armed conflicts are both the common denominator and the leading cause of these humanitarian disasters. In

response to that appeal, France, together with the World Bank, took an initiative last June to organize an Arria Formula meeting to address the issue. In addition to the World Bank, whose commitment is to be commended, several Member States joined us in this undertaking, which was aimed at beginning consideration of this issue by the Council. Building on these exchanges, we adopted a presidential statement last summer (S/PRST/2017/4), and then heard a briefing by the Secretary-General in October (see S/PV.8080). Six months later, it is important that we meet once again to identify concrete measures that can be envisaged by the Council.

A number of important factors have already been underscored, so I will therefore focus my statement on three points: an observation, a reminder and several avenues towards specific solutions.

First, it has been proved and documented that famine is often linked to armed conflict, which is either its leading cause or significantly aggravates it. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Burma and north-east Nigeria are sad reflections of this link. Sixty per cent of people suffering from food insecurity worldwide live in conflict zones.

Persistent drought can play a major role. This is true in East Africa, for example, where drought has led to smaller harvests in countries affected by high levels of food insecurity. United Nations and World Food Programme reports are categorical, as our briefers have clearly and strongly reminded us. Conflicts remain the leading causes of the risk of famine, setting in motion a vicious circle: conflict increases food insecurity, which in turn fuels violence. Civilians are the main victims of this vicious circle of food insecurity and armed conflict. Often people's livelihoods are the direct targets of by violence. Civil infrastructure, aid convoys and humanitarian workers are also being targeted.

Yemen is witnessing an alarming number of obstacles to the free, prompt and ongoing access of humanitarian assistance to civilians. France recalls the need to open all ports and airports to humanitarian assistance and commercial imports so as to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Hunger is not a natural disaster but the consequence of a combination of human factors. It can even be the result of a deliberate strategy, as Mark Lowcock and David Beasley underscored. Access to food is used by armed groups as a recruitment tool in areas where hunger is widespread. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recalled that in Burma, where ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya minority has forced more than 670,000 people to flee the country since August 2017, that phenomenon is continuing today. What is new is that it now includes deliberate starvation, deprivation of access to basic services and the destruction of means of production. We condemn these intolerable violations, which must immediately be brought to an end.

In Iraq's Nineveh governorate, one of the country's agricultural centres, Da'esh, before being driven out, destroyed more than 90 per cent of irrigation infrastructure, thereby delaying by several months or even years a solution to the food-insecurity situation. In eastern Ghouta, one of the most fertile regions of Syria, the Bashar Al-Assad regime has been using the same methods, shelling civilian infrastructure and besieging entire cities to starve the people.

Famine used as a weapon of war against civilians constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and can even constitute a war crime. Today it is more important than ever before to arrive at lasting solutions to the conflicts that lie at the heart of these humanitarian tragedies. This is our collective responsibility, which the Council must steadfastly shoulder.

Secondly, in the light of this observation, a legal reminder is necessary: namely, violations of international humanitarian law must be condemned and cannot go unpunished. It cannot be overemphasized that humanitarian access must be secure, comprehensive and unfettered. That is far from being the case everywhere. In Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria, as well as in South Sudan and Somalia, red tape and security-related obstacles prevent not only humanitarian assistance from reaching people in need but also humanitarian workers from doing their work. Humanitarian workers themselves are also being targeted.

In this context, the protection of humanitarian staff and medical professionals must be prioritized. In October 2017, the Secretary-General alerted us to an uptick in violence against humanitarian workers. In the first 10 months of 2017, humanitarian workers suffered more than 130 attacks. This is completely unacceptable. Let us not mince words: these attacks are war crimes that must not go unpunished. Medical personnel deliver assistance to the ill and wounded, at

the epicentre of conflict, at the risk of their own lives. Their commitment obliges us to act.

It is for that reason that the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, proposed last October a political declaration to protect medical personnel in conflict zones that to date has been endorsed by 13 countries; France calls upon all Member States to join this initiative. Beyond this, we wish to work to better protect humanitarian staff in this respect, as Minister Le Drian indicated yesterday during our national humanitarian conference, in which Ms. Ursula Mueller took part.

Thirdly, under those circumstances, the International Committee of the Red Cross has called for a surge of protection to improve the behaviour of the parties to conflicts, as well as people's livelihoods. Let us see what the Security Council can do to that end. In Somalia, north-east Nigeria, Sudan and Yemen, large-scale famines have been averted thanks to a prolonged humanitarian response. There are three courses of action that can be pursued.

First, we could work on improving prevention and early-warning systems to act more effectively to prevent cases of hunger. We could systematically include in our monitoring mechanisms data on alarming food insecurity levels and the restriction of humanitarian access to populations in the form of hunger indicators. Such indicators could be integrated, for example, into peacekeeping operations and country reports submitted to the Security Council.

Secondly, investments in health services and water supply could be an integral part of a strategy to eradicate hunger in conflict zones. In food and humanitarian crises, infectious diseases, such as cholera or measles, are a major cause of death as public services collapse and populations become more vulnerable to disease.

Thirdly, ending and preventing hunger in conflict zones requires a multifaceted, coordinated response and close cooperation between humanitarian relief and development efforts as part of the humanitarian-development nexus.

As the Secretary-General has said, we have a moral obligation to do better. The Security Council has the tools. France will continue to play its full part in that regard.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.